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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANTANANARIVO 000858

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SUBJECT: MADAGASCAR'S TGV: NONCOMMITTAL ON ICG AND STRANDED
POLITICIANS

REF: A. 09 ANTANANARIVO 853

[B](#). 09 ANTANANARIVO 856

[C](#). 09 ANTANANARIVO 846

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MARQUARDT FOR REASONS 1.4 B AND D.

[1](#). (C) SUMMARY: At a meeting on December 15 with several local COMs, Transition President Andry "TGV" Rajoelina remained noncommittal on the return of his stranded political rivals (still in South Africa), and expressed his concern that the African Union had invited Ravalomanana and Ratsiraka themselves to return to Madagascar for the planned International Contact Group (ICG) meeting on December 17. He repeated the arguments of his Security Minister concerning the December 11 entry ban (reftel A), adding specifically that he would be unable to guarantee these delegations' security if an ICG meeting is held in Antananarivo. The COMs were divided afterward over his ambiguity, with only France and Mauritius taking the optimistic view that his lack of a firm response meant he intends to allow them to return (this evening, per questionable French sources). On December 15, SADC informed the French Embassy in Botswana that Chissano's participation would be contingent on 1) the immediate, uncondition lifting of the travel ban, and 2) a formal invitation for Chissano himself from the Malagasy. Given the uncertainty surrounding the ICG's organization and attendance, Post recommends Department push to postpone the ICG until January, possibly in another country. END SUMMARY.

LET THEM BACK!

[2](#). (C) Ambassador Marquardt, with the Ambassadors of France, Germany, Mauritius (representing SADC), and the interim head of the European Commission, met with Transition President Rajoelina and Foreign Minister Ny Hasina Andriamanjato at 0900 on December 15. The ambassadors' primary message was that the GOM must allow the three other movements' delegations to return to Madagascar in time for a planned meeting on December 17 of the International Contact Group. In addition, they relayed concerns from senior mediator Joaquim Chissano, who stated (prior to a later pronouncement from SADC, see para 5) that he will not attend without a formal invitation directly from the GOM, in light of recent statements implying that he facilitated a "coup d'etat" at

the recent Maputo III summit (reftel C). Ambassador Marquardt also used the forum to clarify that the time had run out on AGOA as of December 15, directly contradicting rumors among GOM members that the USG was "bluffing".

13. (C) Rajoelina was polite in response, but presented little new information. In support of the travel ban, he cited the same concerns as his Minister of Internal Security regarding "public order and internal security", adding that he would be unable to guarantee the security of these delegations if the ICG meeting is held here on December 17. He also specifically inquired about rumors, featured in today's newspapers, that Ratsiraka and Ravalomanana were personally invited by the AU to return to Madagascar for the ICG meeting. Lacking a representative from the AU, the COMs remained circumspect, although we had already seen a copy of the invitation letter AU official Ramtane Lamamra sent to Ravalomanana which appears, curiously, like a personal invitation to Ravalomanana himself. Although it is unlikely that Ravalomanana or Ratsiraka would attempt a return at this time, Rajoelina saw it as yet another attempt to undermine him (or as a new pretext to continue stonewalling): "we're here to solve this crisis, not create a new one".

14. (C) In defending his defiant posture vis-a-vis the Maputo III "resolutions", he referred again to recent "provocations" such as the other movements' letter to the UN/SYG and the Prime Minister of Denmark on the Copenhagen summit, and the practical difficulty of working with his co-presidents over the last month. (NOTE: It would be a stretch to say that Rajoelina had even tried to work with the co-presidents,

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choosing instead to exclude them from his "presidential" activities and refusing them adequate workspace in GOM facilities. END NOTE). He was visibly frustrated by the French Ambassador's recent highly-publicized calls to "let (the other delegations) return", which have been featured in local media, stating that "some Ambassadors talk too much". In response to Ambassador Marquardt's comments on the termination of AGOA, Rajoelina had little to say beyond denying any personal responsibility, and repeated once more that it would be the Malagasy people, not his government, that suffers - entirely missing the irony of his comments as the purported leader of a "popular revolution". After about 20 minutes, he thanked the ambassadors, and ended the meeting.

AN ICG AT WHAT COST?

15. (C) Despite Ambassador Marquardt's repeated questioning of the wisdom of holding this ICG under current circumstances, French Ambassador Jean-Marc Chataigner has made it clear that his government wants it to take place on schedule, and he continued, as of this morning, to believe both that the missing delegations will be allowed to return in time, and that the meeting will serve a useful purpose despite the ever-widening chasm between Rajoelina and his rivals. There are numerous problems, however, that may not be addressed in time. On December 15, SADC Executive Secretary Dr. Tomaz Salomao informed the French Embassy in Botswana that Chissano's participation would be contingent upon "the immediate, unconditional lifting of the travel ban" against Maputo III participants, and the a "clear indication that the participation of Chissano is desired by the HAT". The AU's organizational abilities are in serious doubt as well, with their inadvertently direct invitations of Ravalomanana and Ratsiraka, the lack of a meaningful agenda for the meeting, their dogged support for implementing Maputo III in the face of evidence that it's a non-starter, and widespread perceptions that this is a French initiative in AU clothing. Rajoelina indicated today that he will be unable to guarantee security for the still-stranded delegations if they return, and he was non-committal on Chissano's participation. We had confirmation as of 1700 local today that the stranded delegation did not travel to Madagascar

today.

BEST TO POSTPONE

16. (C) COMMENT: This meeting is ill-prepared and unnecessary at the present time. Post recommends that we seek to postpone the meeting until January, allowing time for the stranded politicians to return, their heads to cool, and proper preparation to take place. In addition, with French Minister of Cooperation Joyandet coming and no high-level representation from Washington (and perhaps none from other capitals either -- and Chissano and other mediators unlikely to attend), this event risks sending an image of French domination. If the ICG is postponed, Joyandet may come anyway, on a bilateral mission that will be understood as such. END COMMENT.
MARQUARDT